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ABSTRACT

The learning resource center is a place where learning materials and students are brought together under some kind of human mediation. The instructional interaction is primarily between student and materials. In planning a learning resource center, the first step is to survey the needs the center should satisfy. In part this can be done by using the checklist included in this paper. This checklist is divided into categories that examine the physical characteristics of the learning resource center, the people, the functions, the materials, any special factors, and evaluation and revision. Each of the categories is subdivided into several sections, with each section covering a number of specific details. (TO)

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IMPLEMENTING THE LEARNING RESOURCES CENTER

Who, Where, How, and with What?

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I'd like to begin with a story that is credited to one of our presidents. The president arrived at his box in the theatre in good season, and forgetting that guests were to join the party, he put his tall stovepipe hat on the seat beside him. A corpulent dowager, wife of a cabinet member arrived and immediately plumped herself down beside him. Surveying the wreckage of his expensive hat, Mr. President said dryly, "Madame, I could have told you it wouldn't fit before you tried it on."

This same difficulty occurs when we approach the subject of learning resource centers. We need to get some approximation of fit before we try one on.

Definitions

The Facility

The major difficulty lies in the many definitions of the term, the many concepts in different peoples' heads, and the different names people use for the same thing. As far as names go, I have

heard people make fine distinctions between learning resources center and learning resource center (I use the two interchangeably); others refer to their learning center, resource center, learning lab, reading center, audio-tutorial center, and on and on. In concept the idea can be as broad as the learning resources center at Benedict College in Columbia, SC, where the library and media center are combined in one building with satellite centers in the language lab, the education department, and the biology department. It can be as narrow a concept as the one room I used for a writing laboratory at Norfolk State College, with no special furnishings at all. It can be a grand new building, planned and designed around the idea of innovative learning as at Oklahoma Christian; maybe it is the old quonset hut that the reading department at Solano Community College inherited when some other departments moved into grand new buildings.

The Audience and Purpose

We find a similar variation in defining or characterizing the audience served. There are schools that designate the learning resource center as only for remediation, where the primary population is students who test low on entry skills or demonstrate problems in basic math and communications skills. Other institutions make the learning center available to students having any kind of difficulty, along a wide range of subjects, but the key phrase is "having difficulty." This approach may require a strong public relations effort to get students to take advantage of the services and to get instructors to refer students to the center for subjects other than basic skills. Some learning centers deal with a single subject--for example, the audio-tutorial

biology lab at Columbia Community College. A facility may provide some components of all subjects for student use, tapes, films, study guides, learning packages, and tests. Prince George's Community College in Maryland is an illustration of this kind. Strong cooperation between faculty and learning resources staff is important to accumulate materials and make them easily accessible; especially important is a good working relationship between "librarian" and "learning resources director." Writing labs, reading clinics and individualized classrooms are other types of learning centers. At Oakland Community College in Michigan, one gets the impression that the whole campus is a learning resource center. At the elementary level we find the British open classroom concept, clustering various learning centers within one classroom or open space.

A Broad Definition

My definition of learning resource center is extremely broad--the learning resource center is a place where learning materials and students are brought together under some kind of human mediation. The instructional interaction is primarily, though not exclusively, between students and materials. Interaction between the student and the human mediator is, for the most part, on a one-to-one or small group basis, except that large learning resource centers may include facilities for large group viewing of films and television. Somewhere within this definition you can find your own learning resource center or at least a basis for clearly defining the concept that you have in mind.

Starting a Learning Center

The best way to learn about how to start a learning center is to survey your needs and discuss the results of your survey with people who have already had some practical experience. The checklists that follow include points pertaining to varied learning centers--some may be common to all; some may be unique. Your interests may include each of the major elements, or only some of them. It would be impossible to go over every element in these checklists in detail, but I would like to touch on a few illustrative points that may open some new doors for you. Some of my points may have the opposite effect--they may close some doors as you develop a more realistic concept of what your learning resource center should be.

Physical Resources

Consider first the checklist on physical resources. It is important to have a realistic idea of the space where you plan to work. If you are just beginning a learning resource center, try to keep your situation as flexible as possible. Be alert to the possibilities for expansion. If you are responsible only for a single discipline, consider all the factors, cost, space, equipment, and personnel, that might make a consolidated center practical, economical, and effective. On the other hand do not close your eyes to the problems of control, of interdepartmental staffing, and of budgeting where consolidation is planned.

Furnishings

Furnishings and equipment should also be kept flexible. There are colleges that have an enormous number of fixed, steel carrels, some with built-in equipment that is becoming obsolete. Educational planners and architects sometimes are working toward a date that is so far in the future that it is impossible to predict the technological delivery systems that will be possible when a building is completed after five years of planning and construction. There has been an epidemic of "carrel fever," or a belief in some kind of magic to be found in a carrel or "corrall" as I heard it called recently. There is a counter-movement that rejects the sterile isolation of carrels. Perhaps neither position must be adopted completely. Instead, base your initial set-up on needs and resources, using a mix of fixed carrels, portable carrels, and tables and chairs near electrical outlets. Stay as simple as possible in the early stages. Occasionally locked installation of players and projectors seems desirable because of high damage or loss rates. Des Moines Community College, however, has been successful with a player and projector check-out system, reporting little or no loss or damage.

Equipment

What kind of equipment do you have? What kind is hidden away in the departmental supply closet? What can be obtained on long-term loan from the audio-visual department. Can students provide their own tape players? At Colorado State College in Pueblo, biology was offered both in conventional and audio-tutorial form. To take the latter, a student had to purchase a $29.95 tape player if he did not

already own one. About half the students opted for audio-tutorial.

Remember that the more complex your equipment, the more problems will be associated with it, and the more difficult it will be to prepare material for it. Synchronized tape-slide machines are convenient for the student, but sometimes expensive cas ettes or cartridges are required. One system that provides multiple responses is great, when it works, but takes about a semester to shake out the problems, and the department cannot prepare their own material. They must rely exclusively on materials from the supplier of the equipment.

For most lessons using sound, student control of stopping, starting, and review is important. Beware of dial access and broadcast systems, even though they are appealing because the student can use wireless earphones. In such systems, once a program starts, the student has no control. For music, certain kinds of lectures, and for literary readings or plays this kind of system is fine. But for self-pacing the element of student control is essential.

Try to visit various installations before you choose your equipment. Talk with students and instructors as well as the director of the facility.

Make a note of the questions on this checklist about duplication of copyright materials. Publishers are beginning to establish licensing policies and a scale of fees, so write or call regarding any program

that you want to duplicate, rather than be in violation of the law.

Staff and Students

Staff

The staff of your learning resource center is important whether it is just one person or includes many instructors or assistants. If you lack adequate staff, there may be sources you have not tapped. Education majors may be required to assist as part of a methods course. Peer tutoring or other forms of student tutoring are used successfully in some schools, but there can be pitfalls, especially if training is not provided. Especially in the developmental and remedial areas, tutors and paraprofessionals must have a clear definition of what they do and do not do. The best assistant I ever found for a writing lab was a former Latin teacher. She was able to isolate specific problems so that students worked on only one or two areas at a time. Having worked with her, I now have a better idea of guidelines to provide for training assistants. De Anza College has a strong program using trained student assistants.

Students

The most vital group involved, of course, are the students who use the resource center. Too seldom does the learning resource director analyze the characteristics of this group. These days it is impossible to identify a typical student. It seems to be more significant to determine the range of certain characteristics. There are many more factors to consider than those in the checklist. Are your students employed? Are they working toward an A.A. or just taking one or two courses? The whole idea of bringing instruction to the student has

received new impetus through the gas shortage. Use of storefronts, apartment party rooms, and factories may draw a whole new population to community college instruction.

Foothill Community College is only one of the many institutions involved in outreach programs. The University of Omaha cooperates with the public library system, and "course mobiles" are being added to the now traditional bookmobile concept.

Most of these approaches are not based on the traditional instructor plus thirty students. Instead they provide use of a learning resource center in remote areas.

Functions

What do you plan to do in your center? You may be surprised at some of the items on the functions checklist. The idea of testing as a service to the regular faculty appalls some learning resource directors. At Montgomery Community College in Tacoma Park, Maryland, however, any faculty member may deposit tests to be administered by the learning resource center. In this way demand testing is possible. Counseling is another aspect that can be successfully wedded to the learning resource center. Anyone teaching remedial skills knows how important counseling can be, but often the counseling department and the learning resource center seem to be working at cross purposes. At the University of California at Long Beach, California, there seems to be a happy marriage of these two areas. Career counseling is also a potential function of a learning resource center and has been

successfully applied at Moorpark Community College. The key to determining the functions is the analysis of the needs and the resources at your institution.

Materials

In selecting or preparing materials for use in the learning resource center, you must be aware of points from all the checklists. Your audience characteristics, age, background, interests, and needs, are significant factors, and once again I stress the range rather than the mean. If diagnosis is a key to the functions you perform, then some kind of diagnostic instrument must be found to diagnose what you are looking for. Be certain that you are making the fullest use of materials that already available. For example, raw sub-scores on standardized tests already being administered to your students may be far more valuable than a converted overall grade level. Level norms vary so much that national norms of standardized tests are not very meaningful. Consider for a moment that ACT scores used as cut-off for remediation in English range from 13 to 17. Since the purpose of diagnosis is to know what to prescribe, you must analyze materials to determine purposes or specific objectives that can be found within the whole. English 3200 can be a very effective tool, but in small doses, 10-25 frames chosen for a special reason, not as a blanket cure. Look for material that can be broken up this way, or better yet, modular material that has been prepared to use in a variety of sequences. Look for material that has frequent opportunities for successful performance and review for the weak student; look also for skip points and credit by pretesting for the capable student. Be sure that the material you select is related to the challenges of

of the course and career a student plans for. This means that if he has to pass a proficiency exam where he must name parts of speech, you have a responsibility to give him this skill, even if you consider that type of examination old-fashioned and irrelevant.

In choosing media, you must again consider your students and their needs as well as your resources. A well-constructed printed course may sometimes be a better starting point than an elaborate multimedia presentation. Remember that one medium does not always transfer directly to another. Reading the script of a tape is not always a satisfactory substitute for the tape. The original medium was prepared for a special sensory channel, and each medium requires certain conventions and modes. Never select a medium for the reason Hillary climbed Everest--"Because it is there."

Special Considerations

The checklist of special considerations relates on such an individual basis that I will not try to cover any of its elements, but any of them may be crucial as you plan.

Evaluation and Revision

Your own evaluation of the learning resource center may be the basis for its continuation and expansion, or possibly for its termination. To get funding, staff, and facilities you must be able to demonstrate in concrete and measurable terms that you do serve students in a manner that meets their needs. Even more important, your continuing program must take into consideration changing needs and new approaches in the continuing process of revision.

Summary

As you examine the components of the learning resources concept, as I have presented them, you will find yourself in a better position than you have been to define your own approach to this concept and your adaptation, existing or planned. The variety of elements listed may lead you to broaden your original idea and to work with your library, your audio-visual center, and other areas which are establishing learning resource centers for special purposes. On the other hand, this same wealth of ideas may lead you to narrow your scope--you may realize that resources--particularly you, the most vital one--have realistic limitations, and you will have to curtail your initial plans because of constraints of plant, budget, and staff.

Each of the items listed in these checklists is a factor in an existing learning resources center. It may be a factor that has no application for your situation now or ever. Or it may be one you simply have not yet encountered. It is my hope that the ideas that have been shared here today may help you to become aware of potential problems and to find new solutions to some that you have already met.

LEARNING RESOURCES CHECKLIST - Physical

I Your space	1. Whole building? 2. Part of library? 3. One room? 4. Series of rooms? 5. Same as classroom? 6. Conveniently located? 7. Storage? 8. Security? 9. Other learning centers on your campus? 10. Carefully defined areas for various activities? How defined?	11. Were you involved in plans for building or remodelling? 12. If so would you make same plans today? 13. Would consolidation be good or bad?
II Furnishings	1. Tables? 2. For how many? 3. Easy chairs? 4. Special furnishings? 5. Standard classroom chairs? 6. Carrels? 7. Fixed or movable? 8. In middle of room or against wall? 9. Adequate arrangement for tutoring? 10. Conferences? 11. Small groups?	12. What changes would you make if you could? 13. How necessary are carrels?
III Equipment	1. Built into carrels? 2. Fastened down? 3. Completely portable? 4. Check-out system? 5. What kind of tape system? 6. What kinds of display devices (projectors?) 7. Sound-visual synchronization? 8. Teaching machine? 9. Special equipment?	30. If planning and buying now, what would you select? 31. Who "owns" equipment? 32. Dept.? 33. A/V dept.?

	9. Special equipment?		32. Dept.? 33. A/V dept.?
			34. Library?
	10. Facilities for making tapes? 11. Soundproof?		
	12. Who can make tapes?		
	13. Facilities for duplicating tapes?		35. Do you charge for this service?
	14. Facilities for making visuals?		36. Are you aware of problems associated with duplication of commercial materials?
	15. Record players?		
	16. TV facilities?	17. Closed circuit?	
	18. CATV?	19. Short range?	
	20. Cassettes?	21. Cartridge?	
	22. Computer used at all?	23. How?	
	24. Type?		
	25. Radio?		
	26. Facilities for viewing films? 27. In ones, or twos?		
	28. Groups?		
	29. Other?		
IV Hours	1. Time you are open?	2. Most popular time?	6. Do you think hours need adjusting?
	3. Least popular?	4. Average number of students at one time?	
	5. Are they scheduled?		

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LEARNING RESOURCES CHECKLIST - People

	Who are they?	A. Background, previous training	B. Training through LRC	C. What they do in LRC?	D. What's good or bad about them?
I Staff (including student assistants)	1. Director?				
	2. College instructors?				
	3. Trained specialists?				
	Testing?				
	Media?				
	Learning problems?				
	Reading?				
	Other?				
	4. High school teachers?				
	5. Paraprofessionals?				
	6. Graduate students?				
	Miscellaneous?				
	English or education majors?				
	7. Undergraduates?				
	English majors?				
	Education majors?				
	8. Credit for their work?				
	9. Unselected?				
	10. Work study?				
	11. Volunteers?				
	12. Students?				
	13. Others?				

	Who are they?	A. How do they happen to come to you?	B. Special needs of this group?	C. How do you meet these needs?	D. Successes or problems?

	12. Students?				
	13. Others?				

	Who are they?	A. How do they happen to come to you?	B. Special needs of this group?	C. How do you meet these needs?	D. Successes or problems?
II Students	1. Pre-college?				
	2. Regular freshman English Comp.?				
	3. Remedial?				
	4. Developmental?				
	5. For reading only				
	6. Writing only				
	7. General communication skills?				
	8. Study skills?				
	9. Help in all subject areas?				
	10. Mean reading level?				
	11. Lowest reading level?				
	12. Seeking counseling?				
	13. Other				

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LEARNING RESOURCES CHECKLIST - Functions

	A. Problems in this function	B. Ways to function efficiently in this area
I Testing 1. Placement? 2. Diagnostic?		
3. Educational? 4. Psychological? 5. Service to regular facility?		
II Tutoring 1. As needed to meet student needs? 2. As primary function?		
III Kinds of instruction 1. Provide basic learning materials? 2. All subjects? 3. Communication skills only? 4. Provide remedial instruction? 5. Provide supplementary materials? 6. Give courses for credit? 7. What courses?		

	6. Give courses for credit?		
	7. What courses?		
	8. Provide G.E.D. courses?		
IV	Counseling		
	1. Career?		
	2. Personal?		
	3. Therapeutic?		
	4. Educational?		
	5. Long-range, i.e., what & how to major?		
	6. Short-range--specific prescription for problems?		
V	Population served		
	1. All students?		
	2. Community at large?		
	3. Referred students?		
	4. Self-referred students?		
VI	Other?		

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LEARNING RESOURCES CHECKLIST - Materials

	See Main Topic Functions for general aspects of scope and purpose. Use this section to describe specific materials.		
	A. Source	B. Material that is useful	C. Material that didn't work
I Scope and Purpose 1. Placement? 2. Diagnostic? 3. Prescriptive? 4. Regular course materials? 5. Supplementary materials?			
II Kinds of materials 1. Print? 2. Tape? 3. A/V? 4. Other?			

	A. Objectives	B. Tests Related to Objectives?	C. Diagnostic Help?	D. Subject Content?	E. Reading Level?	F. Interest or Maturity Level?	G. Other
III Evaluation of materials							

3. A/V:			
4. Other?			

	A. Objectives	B. Tests Related to Objectives?	C. Diagnostic Help?	D. Subject Content?	E. Reading Level?	F. Interest or Maturity Level?	G. Other
III Evaluation of materials							
1. How do you evaluate materials?							
2. Made on campus?							
3. Shared?							
4. Commercial?							
5. Do you evaluate commercial materials before purchase? How?							

	A. Procedure for deciding what to produce	B. Kind of help available to you in producing material	C. Kind of help you can give in producing materials
IV Preparation of materials			

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LEARNING RESOURCES CHECKLIST - Special Factors

I Financing

1. Where is your budget from?
2. Department?
3. Special division?
4. General college?
5. Lab fee?
6. Other?
7. What does it cover?
8. Staff?
9. Equipment?
10. Tapes and films?
11. Consumables?
12. Books?
13. Tests?
14. Other?
15. What are students expected to pay for services of your center?
16. Regular course fee?
17. Lab fee?
18. No fee?
19. Have you ever had or applied for a grant?

II Administrative Support

1. How do you present your needs to the administration?
2. How does administration feel about your center?
3. Who in the administration is responsible for your center?
4. Is there a faculty committee that has responsibility for your center?

III Public Relations?

1. How do you make the college aware of what you have to offer?
2. Brochures?
9. Do you need to recruit students?
10. How do you motivate them once you

III Public Relations?

1. How do you make the college aware of what you have to offer?
2. Brochures?
3. Posters?
4. Newstories?
5. Through counseling office?
6. Through departments?
7. Other?
8. Do you find misunderstandings about what you do?
9. Do you need to recruit students?
10. How do you motivate them once you get them?

IV Record Keeping

1. How do you keep track of what students need?
2. How do you keep track of what students have completed?
3. Who keeps records?
4. Students themselves?
5. Clerical help?
6. Professional staff?

V Special Problems

Is this a one-person operation?

Would the center fade if one person left?

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LEARNING RESOURCES CHECKLIST - Evaluation and Revision

I What do you evaluate?

1. No. of hours center used?
2. No. of students using center?
3. Changes in students?
4. Higher scores on standardized tests?
5. Mastery of objectives?
6. Fewer errors on written papers?
7. Improved reading comprehension?
8. Improved reading speed?
9. General improvement in study skills?
10. Better motivation?
11. Better performance in regular courses?
12. Student preference for individualized courses?

13. How do you measure and report results?

II What use do you make of results?

1. Reports to department
2. To college?
3. To newspapers?
4. In journals?
5. To demonstrate changing

3. To newspapers?

4. In journals?

5. To demonstrate changing different needs from those originally surveyed?

6. To change methodology, scope and sequence of what you do?

7. To change in objectives?

8. In preparation of new budget?

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